

# THE EUGENICS REVIEW

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# PERIODICALS

## Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology

**March-April 1943, Vol. 33, No. 6.**—*The Psychology of Irresistible Impulse* is considered in a paper by Jess Spirer, senior psychologist, Western State Penitentiary, Pittsburg, Pa. The author considers it a serious error to limit the concept of irresistible impulse to the insanities, and that such a limitation is fictitious, arbitrary and without sound theoretical or factual basis. He discusses briefly irresistible impulse in relation to insanity, emotion, the psychoneuroses and habit, and reminds us that we are all capable of resisting emotional impulses up to a certain point, but that there are great individual differences in our ability to do so, both in regard to the nature of the stimulus and the degree of personality integration of the person receiving the stimulus, and that when the control of the higher centre of the brain no longer functions the impulse to do a specific act is, for all intents and purposes, irresistible. A passing reference is made to the obsessive-compulsive states found among certain psychoneurotics and to the view that habits are impulsive, and the author asserts that the law arbitrarily speaks of a single kind of irresistible habit. He declares that there is no readily observable line of demarcation between resistible and irresistible impulses, and observes that the Courts have sensed this and have wavered in their inclination to accept the defence of irresistible impulse in case the concept of irresistibility is extended to its limits, and no one be held responsible for his acts on the ground that all behaviour is "over-determined."

The reviewer believes that if medical evidence is concerned with impulsive conduct as a defence to a criminal charge it should apply itself to a consideration of whether the known facts concerning the crime, the personal history, and the results of the examination of the defendant indicate that the impulsive conduct was due to a recognized form of insanity or to an obsessive-compulsive state. If due to the former the associated indications of major mental disease will support the view that the impulse which caused the crime was probably irresistible. If due to the latter, the circumstances of the crime and an unprompted account by the accused of his thoughts and feelings immediately before, during and after the crime, together with his personal history, will enable the psychiatrist to determine whether the offence was due to a genuine or assumed obsessive-compulsive state.

It is, of course, a matter of common experience that intense emotional situations, as well as habituation, occasionally cause some persons to act in an impulsive manner more readily than do others, although they are not suffering from insanity or a minor mental abnormality unless the latter term

is so extended as to be useless for practical purposes. The author suggests that if the rehabilitation of the offender is the aim of the judiciary the law may hold that the stronger the impulse the greater the need for treatment and that "irresistible impulse would be the very antithesis of defence for conviction." The reviewer believes that whilst the great majority of criminals are sane and responsible, and a few are irresponsible according to law because of insanity, there is an intermediate group of non-sane non-insane offenders for whom a mental hospital on the one hand and a prison on the other are inappropriate. He has suggested that some of these offenders require custodial care in a special kind of penal institution in order to secure their reclamation and at the same time secure the safety of the public. And he believes that in this direction lies the next forward step in the medical treatment of convicted offenders as well as the prevention of certain forms of crime.

In the same number John Newton Baker, assistant professor of Sociology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, writes on *The Press and Crime*. He refers to the trial by newspaper instead of trial by jury situation. "Time and again, prospective jurors have been prejudiced by reading newspaper stories and editorials about a case. Consequently, it is often necessary to seek a change of venue—costly and hampering." No one with long first-hand knowledge of criminals can avoid being struck by the vanity of many, and their gratification if their name and misdeeds are mentioned in the public press. In this country, however, few are likely to accuse the press generally of publishing the account of a crime in a purposely sensational manner, although most of us will agree that usually crime should be removed from the prominence of the front page.

W. NORWOOD EAST.

## Social Forces

**May 1943, Vol. 21, No. 4.**—*The Place of the Child in Present-Day Russia*.—By Nathan Berman.—In the present struggle, the Soviet Union mainly depends on those who have come to maturity in the past twenty-five years. This article reviews the Soviet child-care programme of the period. In Czarist Russia the status of children was low; but in the midst of the besetting problems of November 1918 a decree was issued by the Revolutionary Government which made the treatment of the juvenile delinquent much more enlightened. This was the first of many attempts to better the condition of children, especially the homeless waifs. Similar advances were made in all departments of maternity and child welfare, including leave with full pay for the mother in the later stages of

pregnancy, and the provision of day nurseries which accommodated 700,000 children in 1938. Children were encouraged to attend open-air camps, and to attend cultural courses at the Palaces of the Young Pioneers. The present war has not apparently increased anti-social tendencies, principally because the children have felt themselves as integrated in the State; and there is no doubt that the inspired resistance of the Russians is largely due to the interest shown by the U.S.S.R. in its younger citizens. Evacuation was rapidly organized, finally, with as little upheaval as departure to a summer camp. Organizations of workers and of soldiers combined to safeguard the welfare of war orphans. In return, the Timur movement was started for the formation of bands of juvenile voluntary helpers; these bands have not only accomplished large-scale efforts of considerable social worth, but have also aided in the elimination of many cases of adolescent personal maladjustment.

*War and Marriage.*—By Constantine Panunzio.—It is apparently a statistical fact that the marriage rate rises several months *before* the outbreak of a war. This is unlikely to be due to the prescience of the people concerned, but rather to economic and social conditions induced by developing events. Talk of war and the mobilization of young men enhance the value of a settled background, and the shouldering of responsibility may be encouraged by the possibility of deferred service for the married man. Stimulation of the emotions may make the cautious woman more daring, and others wish to identify themselves with the war by marrying a Service man. Furthermore, there is the attraction of the man in uniform and the widened circle of acquaintances. The author describes more particularly conditions in the U.S.A. in which the gradual onset of the war made the effects still greater. In the first few months after the country entered the war the marriage rates went up still more steeply, especially in manufacturing towns of medium population. This appeared to be mainly due to increase in wages and because the largest towns did not have unabsorbed potentialities of work-expansion. For those who subscribe to the doctrine that two can live as cheaply as one, the doctrine that two pay-packets are greater than one is still more attractive.

D. ROBERTSON-RITCHIE.

## Sociological Review

**July-October 1942, Vol. 34, Nos. 1 and 2.**—*Loudoun Square: A Community Survey.* Part I.—By K. L. Little.—Little describes the sociology of the coloured community of the dock-area of Cardiff. The investigation was carried out in August and September 1941. Fieldwork had to be conducted with tact because the people had suffered from many a sensational write-up in the past.

The occupation is mainly seafaring and tends to

be seasonal: half-caste girls find employment with difficulty. The colour bar—though relaxed during the war—still appeared to be strong. However, the coloured seaman is regarded as a person of low status, and that fact may have reinforced the differentiation.

No dependable figures are available of the number of coloured inhabitants, but West Indians and West Africans appear to predominate. It was assumed that each family unit contained two children under 21, and that 39 per cent were married. In the period 1930-38 there appeared to be no observable ratio between total tonnage of shipping returns, in the dock and population. In any given period, the number leaving the area was greater than in any other ward in Cardiff; but at the time of the investigation approximately two-thirds had lived there longer than two years.

**Vol. 34, Nos. 3 and 4.**—*Loudoun Square*, Part II.

—By K. L. Little.—Clear distinction can be made between Loudoun Square and the adjacent Bute Street (with its unsavoury reputation), but they are grouped together in the minds of people who live elsewhere. In present conditions the area cannot be regarded as poverty-stricken, but rents appeared to be high and there was a fair degree of overcrowding. The coloured population appeared to be following the usual pattern of ousting the "poor-white," who thereupon moved further into the dock area.

The author suggests that the "promiscuity" described in a previous report may be a custom of seafaring people of this type rather than an idiosyncrasy of the coloured people; and, on the whole, conformity to custom is the rule. Extra-marital arrangements are undoubtedly conditioned by the fact that the coloured seaman between voyages has much leisure and confined facilities for occupying it. Dicing is popular, but the participants are regulars; betting on dogs and horses and football pools are more general diversions. Large sums are said sometimes to be involved; but it should not be forgotten that *The Economist* has estimated that the annual *per capita* expenditure on gambling averages £15 in the U.K. Films are very popular, drinking has a more limited attraction, and the younger people like dancing. Education is freely available, but progress to a secondary school is not always accepted by the parents of coloured children, perhaps because of the colour bar. Pigmentation of the skin is a matter of great regard, particularly among the half-castes; and in the same person pride in primitive institutions may accompany a desire to imitate English cultural traits.

*The Importance of the Family.*—By May Ravden.—This article shows how the Evacuation tested the validity of former theories on family influence. This influence can be emotional, moral, and intellectual. Young children need the security of family life, adolescents the discipline, and parents the outlet of energy and emotion.

Evacuation proved an emotional disturbance, and the strength of family feeling was illustrated by the children's comments. Home-sickness caused nervous and moral upsets. Fear of the children's ill-treatment, jealousy of the foster-parents, and the parents' own psychological need made them

recall their children. Evacuation failed through lack of information about children and foster-parents, and because institutes could not replace the home. Future civilization depends on healthy family relationships.

D. ROBERTSON-RITCHIE.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Estimates of Future Population

*To the Editor, Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I believe that it is intended that new estimates of the future population of England and Wales shall be made by the Population Investigation Committee. Certainly the estimates of future birth rates and population totals, for England and Wales, given in *The Future of our Population*, turned out to be very erroneous. Taking the figures from the second edition of this pamphlet, 1938, page 17, the probable average crude birth rate for the 5 years 1935-39 was given as 12.41; actually it was 15.1. Similarly, the probable average crude birth rate for the 5 years 1940-44 was given as 10.72; actually for the 3 years 1940-42 it was 14.9. The average error for the 8 years was 3.2. It is not possible to attribute these large differences between predicted and actual values to the effect of the war, because the discrepancies began in 1935.

The moral is, perhaps, obvious. We should be careful not to attach any great importance to predictions of future birth rates. General views of tendencies may properly be held; and there are certain statistical predictions, based on life-table expectations, which afford a reasonably sure ground for calculations, such as the number of survivors, in any given year, of the females born within a certain space of time. But the prediction, years in advance, of birth rates, is liable, as we have seen, to be misleading.

C. F. ARDEN-CLOSE.

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Winchester.

### "Birth, Poverty and Wealth"

*To the Editor, Eugenics Review*

SIR,—We are all of us indebted to Mr. Titmuss for his valuable analysis of the variations in infantile mortality in his five economic classes. I do not think that his conclusions with regard to the

cause, a purely economic reason, will meet with quite the same acceptance. Firstly, an omnibus class "unskilled labour" is most unsatisfactory. Galton divided it into unskilled labour in constant employment and unskilled labour in casual employment and made it the dividing line in the community. The former comprise a most valuable section of the community; the latter comprise a most miscellaneous group, including members of the so-called "Social Problem Group." As intelligence is an important factor in this question, one certainly would expect to find more progress in the higher classes, especially in a transitional period when there is new knowledge to be assimilated.

And this brings me on to my second point. He is, through no fault of his own, rather in the position of a man describing a mile race in the middle of the third lap, when there is still a lap and a half to run. The infantile mortality rate only begun to fall in 1900; he gives us the position in 1911, 1921, and 1931. But since then we have had another enormous drop. We have lately been given a figure of 48—a fall of 20 per cent on the 1931 figure. Until this figure is analysed we cannot tell whether his phenomenon is not purely transitional.

But, thirdly, there is a genetic point on which he just touches in his Appendix C. There is a considerable correlation between the birth rate and infantile mortality figures. Those countries with a low birth rate have a low infantile mortality rate and vice versa. Which are the countries with the low birth rates? Those where the families are small. Now, as long ago as 1911, Dr. R. J. Ewart in the REVIEW pointed out that second children in a family had the lowest infantile mortality rate and that this rate rose steadily until the eleventh child and upward had a rate three times that of the second child. No doubt the figures have changed since then, but not the trend. Apply this to the five economic classes. The size of the family is certainly greater in the Vth and the Ist—so here is a factor tending to produce the phenomenon

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